

Achieve's Annual Meeting for
State Leaders and National Partners
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Ready or Not

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Rising to the Challenge: ***Are High School Graduates Prepared for College and Work?***

Embargoed until December 17, 2014



***Key findings from surveys among recent public high school graduates
Conducted November 2014***

Methodology

- A national online survey was conducted October 31 to November 17, 2014, among 1,347 recent public high school graduates from the classes of 2011 through 2014, including:
 - 741 students who are currently enrolled in two-year and four-year colleges (320 of whom have taken at least one remedial course)
 - 606 graduates who are not currently enrolled in two-year or four-year colleges, including 215 who attended college but quit before finishing
 - 277 African-American and 375 Hispanic recent public high school graduates

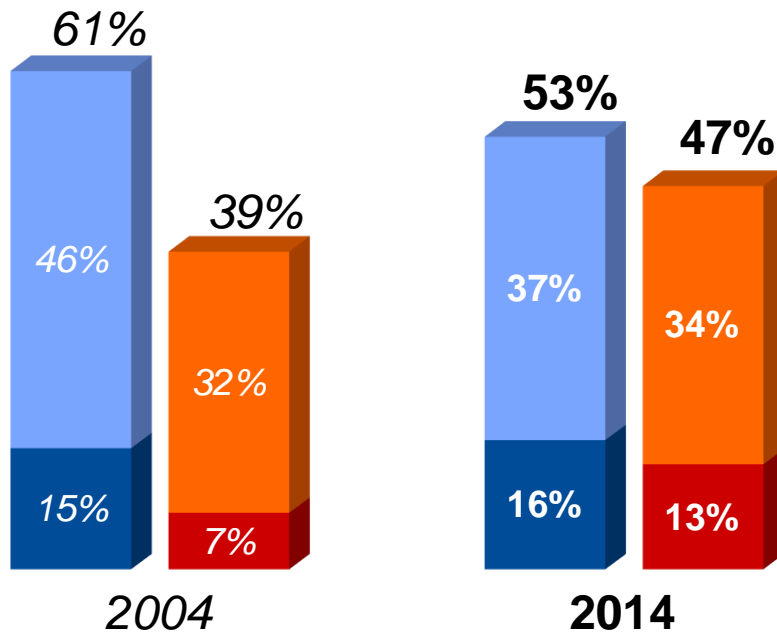
Too many recent high school graduates report gaps in their preparedness for college and work after high school.

About half report gaps in preparation for life after high school

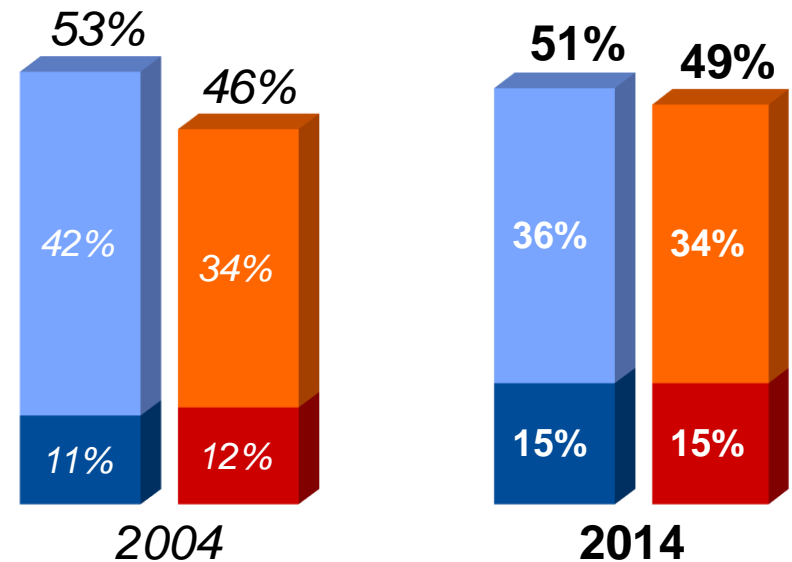
How well did your high school education prepare you for college/the working world?

■ **Extremely well**
prepared for every-
thing I face
 ■ **Very well**
generally able to do
what is expected
 ■ **Somewhat well**
some gaps in my
preparation
 ■ **Not well**
large gaps/struggle
to keep up

College students



Non-students



How well did high school prepare you for college/work?

- **Large gaps** in one or more subject areas:
 - **49%** of college students
 - **43%** of non-students
- **At least some gaps** in one or more areas:
 - **83%** of college students
 - **81%** of non-students

Significant gaps across subject areas

How well did high school prepare you for college/work in these areas?

	College students		Non-students	
	At least some gaps	Large gaps/struggling	At least some gaps	Large gaps/struggling
Work and study habits	50%	22%	41%	13%
Oral communications/public speaking	46%	18%	47%	16%
Doing research	45%	17%	32%	9%
Science	41%	14%	49%	18%
Applying what I have learned to solve problems	36%	12%	41%	13%
Mathematics	36%	12%	41%	15%
Writing	36%	9%	34%	10%
Computer and technology skills	31%	10%	34%	10%
Reading and understanding complicated materials	30%	7%	27%	6%

Areas in which graduates wish their high school had done better

In which two areas do you most wish your high school had done a better job of preparing you for the expectations of college/work world?

	College students		Non-students	
	2014	2004	2014	2004
Work and study habits	31%	25%	19%	12%
Oral communications/public speaking	27%	21%	28%	19%
Mathematics	24%	22%	26%	22%
Doing research	20%	13%	8%	7%
Writing	17%	15%	9%	11%
Computer and technology skills	14%	13%	18%	17%
Applying what I have learned to solve problems	13%	5%	19%	9%
Science	13%	13%	11%	13%
Reading and understanding complicated materials	10%	12%	9%	11%
Don't need to be better prepared in any of these areas	7%	2%	14%	3%

College is more difficult than expected for those who had gaps in preparation

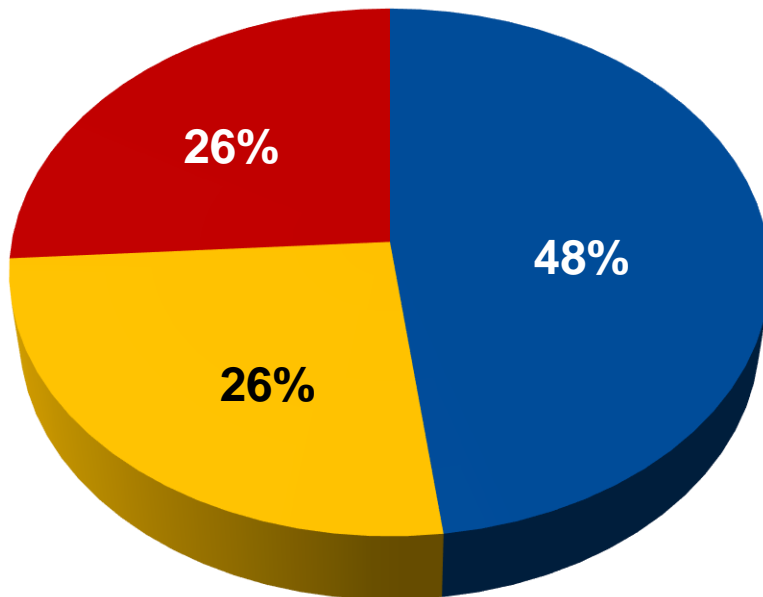
When it comes to the school work expected of you in college, how has college been so far?

■ College is easier than I expected

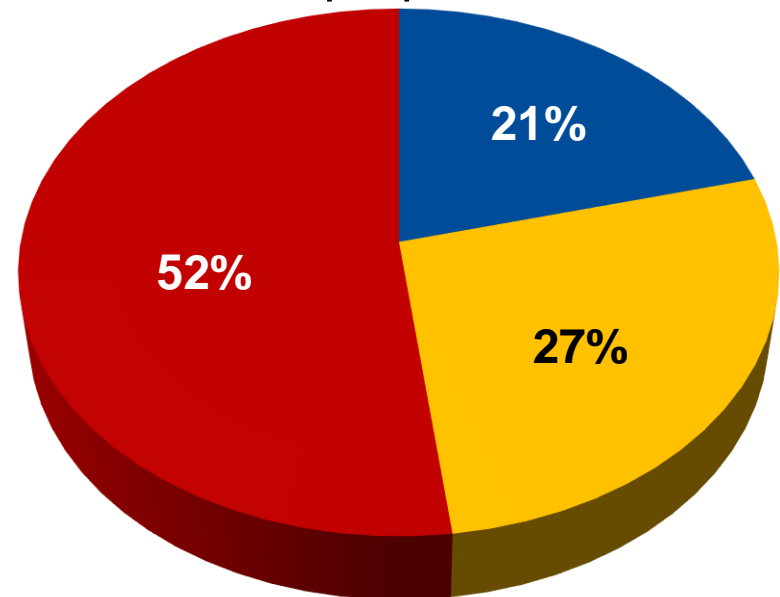
■ College is about the same as I expected

■ College is harder than I expected

Students who feel they were extremely/very well prepared



Students who feel they were less prepared

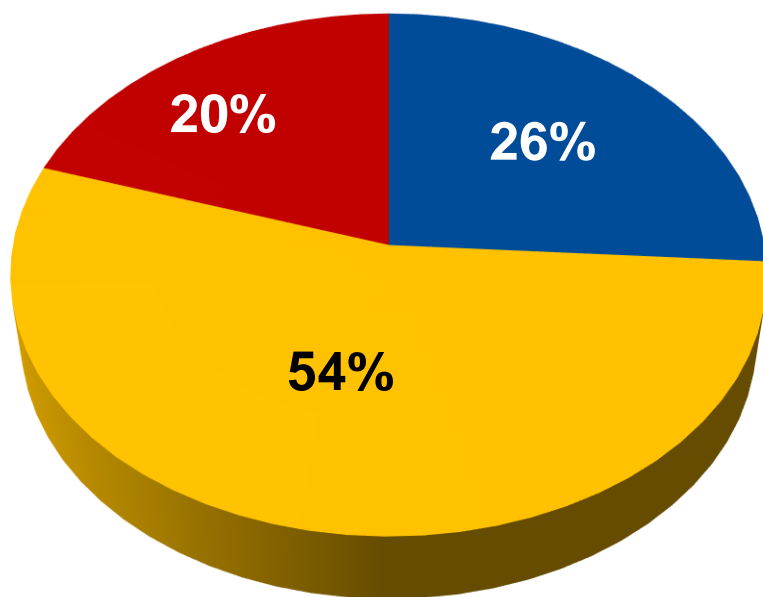


Only one in five report their high school set high academic expectations

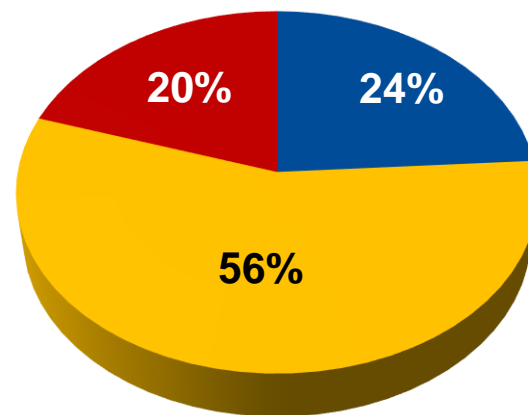
Which best describes your experience in high school?

■ High academic expectations, significantly challenged
 ■ Moderate expectations, somewhat challenged
 ■ Low expectations, it was pretty easy to slide by

All high school graduates 2014



All HS graduates 2004



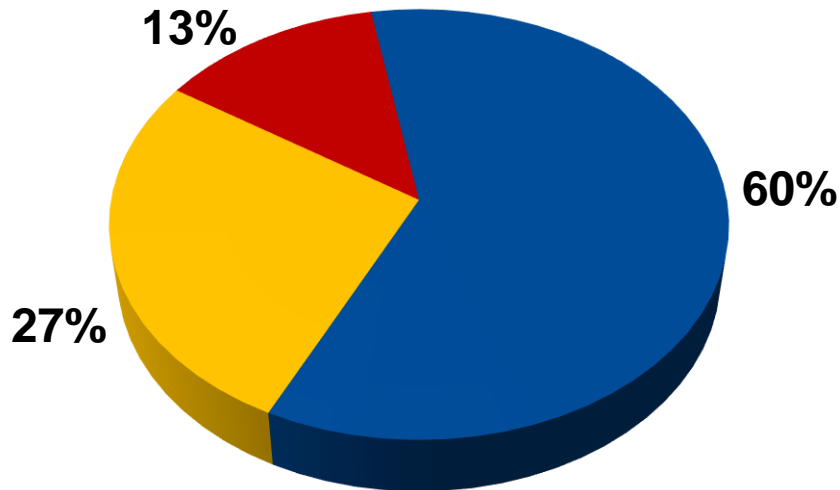
**Knowing what I know now,
I would have worked harder.**

Many say they would have worked harder if they knew then what they know now

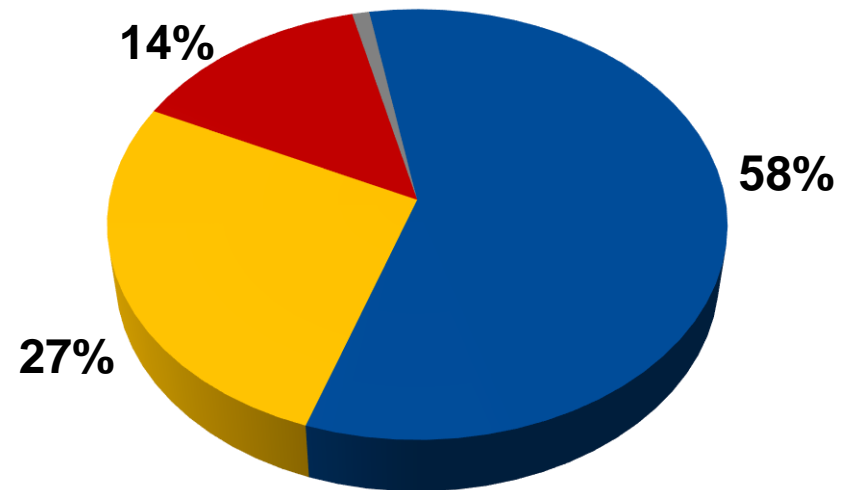
Knowing what I know today about the expectations of college/the work world, if I were able to do high school over again, I would:

- Work harder/apply myself more to coursework even if it means less time for other activities
- Apply myself to my coursework the same as I did
- Apply myself less to my coursework and spend more time doing other activities

College students

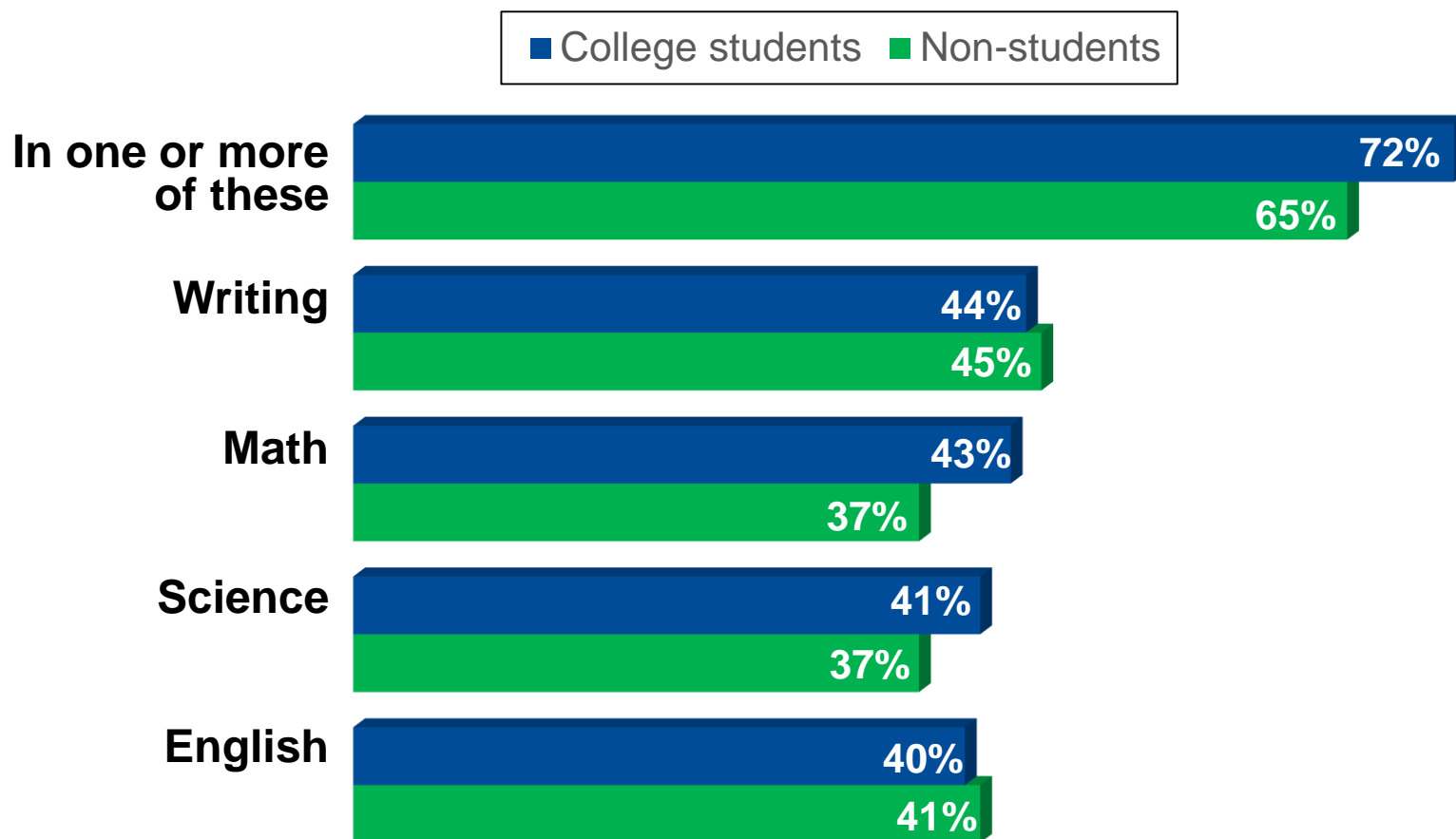


Non-students



Most say they would have taken higher-level or more challenging courses

Knowing what I know today about the expectations of college/the work world, I would have taken higher-level/more challenging courses in high school in these areas:



In their own words...

“[If I could go back to high school], I would study hard and go to school every day. It wouldn’t matter if I like the teacher or not, I just have to get through it to take that next step and go to college without taking pre-reqs, wasting money.”

Female, New Orleans,
2-Year College Student

“I’m struggling. I made it harder on myself. My family told me ‘do what you have to do to take that next step.’ I didn’t do that. I rebelled and I was failing classes. I didn’t get the basic skills I should have had when I got to college and it was harder for me.”

Female, New Orleans,
2-Year College Student

“I would put a little more effort into math class. I didn’t put forth the extra effort and as a result I scored one point below what I needed for [University of New Orleans]. So, I had to go to Delgado instead and couldn’t go into my major because I was set back and had to take a math remedial class to do what I want to.”

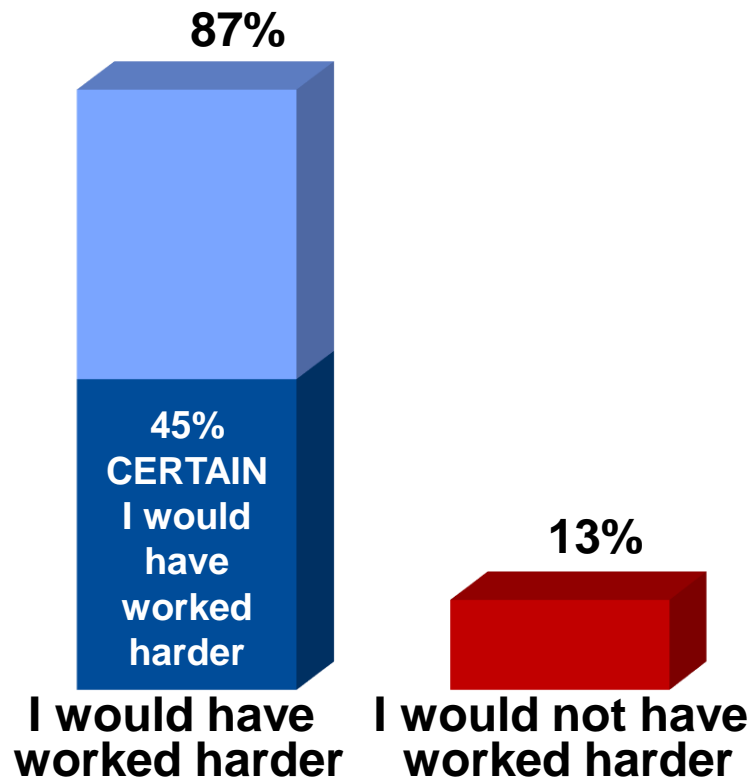
Male, New Orleans,
2-Year College Student

Potential Solutions Exist.

Most say they would have worked harder if expectations had been higher

If my high school had demanded more, set higher academic standards, and raised expectations of the course work and studying necessary to earn a diploma:

All high school graduates



I am CERTAIN I would have worked harder:

Men	43%
Women	48%
Whites	42%
African Americans	53%
Hispanics	50%
All college students	48%
In two-year college	49%
In four-year college	47%
Took remedial classes	54%
No college	39%
Some college/dropped out	45%
Extremely/very prepared	51%
Less prepared	39%

Those who experienced higher expectations feel better prepared

The education I received in high school prepared me extremely or very well for college/the working world:

College students whose high school had:



Non-students whose high school had:



Grads of schools that excel at encouraging students to take the most advanced courses feel better prepared

The education I received in high school prepared me extremely or very well for college/the working world:

College students who say their high school did:



Non-students who say their high school did:



Grads who took math beyond Algebra II feel better prepared

The math I took in high school prepared me extremely or very well for college/the working world:

College students who took:



Non-students who took:



Gender and race/ethnicity gaps exist in high level math achievement

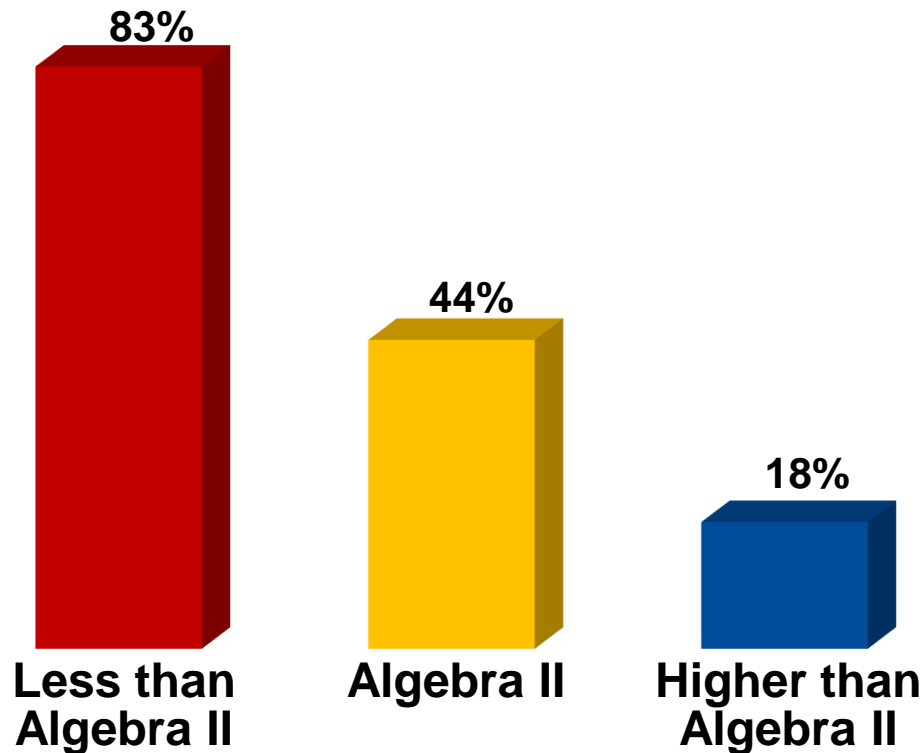
What is the highest level math course you took and passed in high school?

	Lower than Algebra II	Algebra II	Higher than Algebra II
All high school grads	15%	27%	54%
Men	16%	23%	56%
Women	14%	31%	52%
Whites	13%	27%	57%
African Americans	22%	26%	46%
Hispanics	16%	32%	47%
All college students	10%	23%	65%
Grads with no college ever	25%	33%	32%
Grads with some college/dropped out	18%	33%	45%
College men	9%	21%	69%
College women	10%	26%	61%
White college students	7%	23%	69%
African American college students	18%	25%	55%
Hispanic college students	13%	28%	56%

College students who have lower math attainment take remedial courses at much higher rates

What is the highest level math course you took and passed in high school?

Current college students who took any remedial classes



Biggest gaps in communicating /encouraging are in connecting high school to future success

How did your high school do in each of these areas?

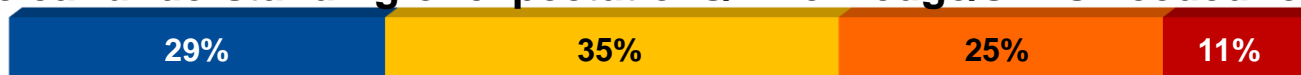
All high school graduates

■ Very good job ■ Good, should have done a little more ■ Fair, should have done a lot more ■ Poor job

Encouraging you to explore various professional/career opportunities



Giving you clear understanding of expectations/ knowledge/skills needed for future



Encouraging you to take the most advanced courses



Communicating about classes/grades needed to get into college



Communicating once a year/more on whether you were on track for college



Communicating about classes/grades needed to graduate

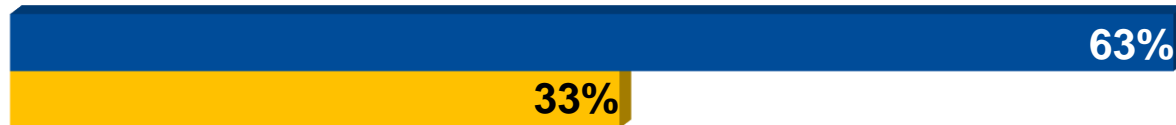


Grads of schools that excel at communicating/encouraging feel better prepared

The education I received in high school prepared me extremely or very well for college/the working world:

- High school graduates who say their HS did a very good/good job on this
- High school graduates who say their HS did a fair/poor job on this

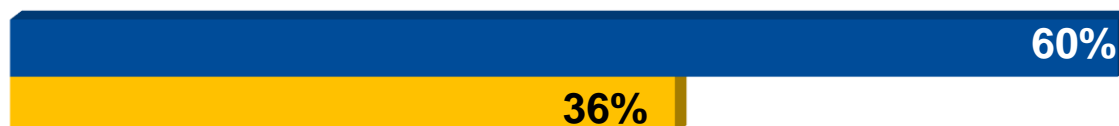
Giving me clear understanding of expectations/knowledge/skills needed for future



Encouraging me to explore various professional/career opportunities



Communicating about classes/grades needed to get into college



Grads of schools that excel at communicating/encouraging feel better prepared

The education I received in high school prepared me extremely or very well for college/the working world:

- High school graduates who say their HS did a very good/good job on this
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Encouraging me to take the most advanced courses



Communicating at least once a year whether I was on track for college



Communicating about classes/grades needed to graduate high school



Lower income graduates are least likely to report their high schools excelled at communicating/encouraging

My high school did a very good/good job in in each of these areas

	HS grads from below average income family	HS grads from average income family	HS grads from above average income family
Encouraging you to explore various professional/career opportunities	52%	61%	62%
Giving you clear understanding of expectations/knowledge/skills needed for future	57%	66%	68%
Encouraging you to take the most advanced courses	57%	64%	73%
Communicating about classes/grades needed to get into college	64%	67%	74%
Communicating once a year/more on whether you were on track for college	63%	65%	77%
Communicating about classes/grades needed to graduate from high school	74%	77%	80%

Broad agreement on proposals

What impact would this have in encouraging high school students to work harder and be better prepared for life after high school?

All high school graduates

■ Would improve things a great deal ■ Would improve things somewhat

Opportunities for real-world learning



**Total
would
improve
90%**

Communication early in high school about courses needed for college/careers



87%

Opportunities to take challenging courses



86%

More help for those who need extra tutoring



83%

Assessments late in HS so students can find out what they need for college



77%

Require all to take four years math and biology, chemistry, and physics



72%

Require students to pass exams in math and writing to graduate



71%

The bottom line: Findings

- Nearly half of recent high school graduates report they were not fully prepared for their next steps
- They see clear gaps in their preparation, and this has real consequences:
 - Only one quarter feel their high school set high expectations
 - Over one quarter wish their high school had done a better job in key areas: study habits, communications, and math
 - Four in ten current students find college more difficult than expected
- Recent grads tell us they would have worked harder if they had fully understood the challenges that lay ahead
- Both college students AND non-college students report not having as much academic preparation as they needed
- Recent Grads—whether they are in college or working—feel better prepared if they took more advanced courses in high school

The bottom line: Solutions

- The research suggests that providing real academic challenge for high school students and communicating with them about what is needed for future success helps to better prepare grads for the road ahead
- Providing consistent and regular signals to ALL high school students about what academics are needed to be ready for college and careers is key:
 - Set rigorous expectations, students will rise to the challenge
 - Have graduation requirements that ensure academic preparation for all
 - Encourage all students to take the most advanced classes
 - Ensure the rigor of classes offered; reliance on course titles can lead to watered down courses
 - Communicate with students early in high school (if not before) about the expectations and skills (including courses) needed for future success—including college admissions and career interests
 - Regularly tell students whether they are “on track”
 - Tie learning in high school to life outside the classroom by providing real-world learning opportunities
 - Provide support/help for students who need it (e.g. tutoring)
 - All means ALL. Be sure all students understand and know the benefit of academic preparation for college and careers; everyone needs to be prepared for their next steps.



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